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Considerations on implementation of a social accountability management system model in higher education

Ecaterina-Alina Sandu^{a*}, Gheorghe Solomon^a, Daniela Morar^b, Al-Shraah Muhammad^a^aUniversity „Politehnica” of Bucharest, Romania^bSC ISO System Business SRL, Bucharest, Romania

Abstract

The company is in constant change, influenced by technology, competitive environment, legal and regulatory requirements and the mission of higher education is to meet the specific needs of education and professional training of the individual, as well as the needs of social and economic development of society. According to the sustainability vision, implementing a Social Accountability Management System (SAMS) in higher education is one of the viable solutions for solving the current problems of the society. Effective implementation of the SAMS in higher education means approaching the student as an active participant in the educational process, the teacher as a trainer, manager and leader, education unit with the role of modelling the socially accountable human resources. Therefore, this work develops a number of proposals on the implementation of a social accountability management system in higher education, based on customization of some requirements of the National Education Law and adapting them to the requirements of the social accountability standard SA8000.

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1. Introduction

Education is essential for sustainable development. Social accountability must be viewed in terms of the university itself (designing objectives, specialization and university curricula; teaching methods and relationships with students, extra-university activities and so on), but especially the social accountability of education outside the

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +40 726-225-413

E-mail address: alina.sandu@smart-tc.ro

university (the correlation of education with the labour market and insertion of graduates in employment, lifelong learning).

To achieve the sustainable development goals, educational institutions must evolve through implementation of the sustainable development principles, to be a model in the progress of society based on professional training of future specialists to be able to lead such a society. Standard SA 8000, regarding requirements for social accountability management system approaches a number of nine mandatory requirements for demonstrating the compliance. Although the standard SA 8000 does not establish a model based on the principle of PDCA, I have approached the management system requirement as a structure that follows the steps: PLAN – DO – CHECK – ACT. In figure 1 it is presented the model for social accountability management system, that has a procedural approach, based on the PDCA principle, being customer-oriented, as well as other interested parties-oriented and uses PAS 99:2012 standard principles, designed to help organizations achieve benefits from strengthening of common management requirements of all system standards (quality, environment, health and labour safety etc.) for an effective management of such requirements (Standard PAS 99, 2012)

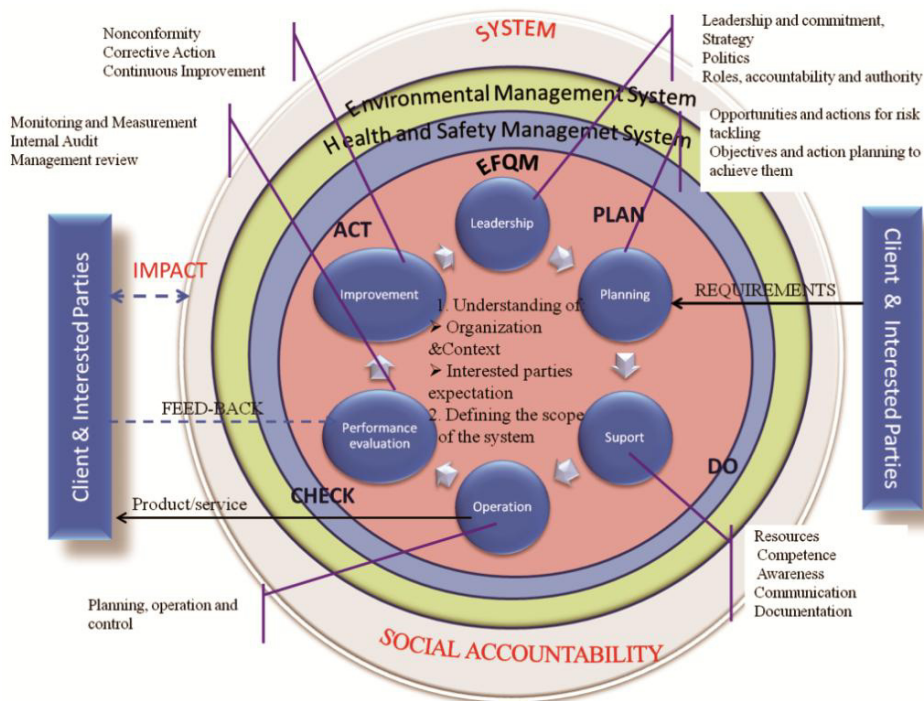


Fig. 1. Model of a Social Accountability Management System.

Implementing a social responsibility management system in accordance with the SA 8000 Social Accountability (Social Accountability International, 2008) standard, means a strategic decision of the management of an organization representing an entire business culture that includes rules of conduct and ethics, environmentally friendly technology environment, fair treatment of labour, transparent relationships with the authorities, moral integrity, community investment.

The training provided by the universities must anticipate and respond to the needs of a society in a permanent change in social life, and to use appropriate solutions to youth, so that they discover their personality and that they produce that mass communicators and receivers defining an open society.

2. The effectiveness of implementing a Social Accountability Management System (SAMS) in higher education

The education process can be considered as an element of national security which represents a force for stability of the society through its strong impact on society induced by the formation of a well-trained educated, socially responsible generation.

For a university to become socially responsible is necessary to understand the needs and expectations of the stakeholders by focusing on customer satisfaction and orientation towards quality, environment and development of job safety and health. The correct identification of the customers and of the interested parties (internal and external of the university) is a success factor in implementing a Social Accountability Management System.

According to the Education Law, art. 199, (1) "Students are considered partners of institutions of higher education and equal members of the academic community. In the religious education, the students are members of the academic community as disciples" (National Education Law, 2011)

Implementing a SMRS in the higher education, resulting in a sustainable university involves a new approach to the role of the student, which is an active participant in the educational process.

Through the active participation of the student in the educational process, it is aimed to increase its responsibility in the own learning and accepting a new role, that of auto manager, leader of their own learning process. This approach will allow students to learn from mistakes by increasing the ability to "learn how to learn" allowing them, after graduation, to cope with the social and environmental challenges of society, many responsibilities by acquiring new skills, knowledge and skills and, not least, to fend for themselves by developing practical skills.

The decentralization of the education system involves strong leadership and managerial restructuring function to assume a broader decision-making charge. Changes occurred in higher education institutions (social, economic, political) determine the necessity of assuming the role of teachers both leadership - manager and trainer in human resources modelling with promoting teacher learning and development ability to innovate and develop the critical thinking of students.

From the scientific literature of the management standards and experience, it can be said that the adoption of the guidelines for social responsibility efforts involving universities and adaptations continue with:

- a. establishing, documenting and communicating the roles, the responsibilities and the authorities of all those involved in the social responsibility management system (SMRS). Appointment of a management representative and a staff representative are mandatory requirements of the standard SA 8000 (Standard for Social Accountability, 2008). The staff representative should not be confused with the union leader and / or with the student association president,
- b. university strategic objectives shifting of relevant functions and staff. The hierarchy of objectives, for which achievement is oriented the overall activity of the organization and that of the component entities, requires, logically, the hierarchy of plans that ensure coordination of actions at different hierarchical levels of management within the organization. Figure 2 shows schematically how the strategic objectives are shifting on relevant functions.

For an efficient implementation of a social responsibility management system in an institution of higher education, we must consider the following aspects:

- creating an organizational culture favourable to change compatible with the strategy adopted,
- risk management approach based on ISO 31000:2009 (Risk Management Standard 31000, 2009), as a permanent component of the planning process within the organization, brings into focus the social risk,
- establishing and implementing an effective capacity management process of the suppliers, communication (SA 8000 – Social Accountability Standard, 2008; ISO 9001 – Quality Management System. Requirements, 2008; ISO 14001 – Environmental Management System). The design of the communication process assumes the definition of the communication channels, but without limiting at them, as:
- improvement proposals (environment, health and safety, community service, etc.);

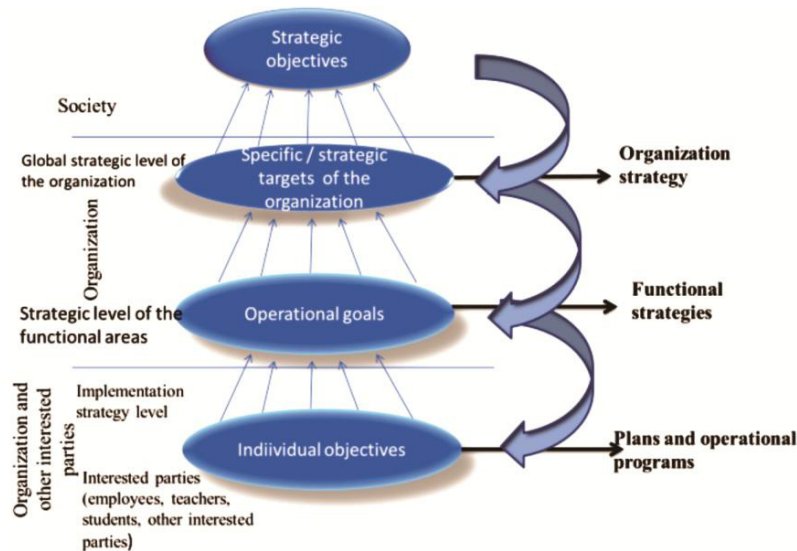


Fig.. 2. The hierarchical levels within the organizations, the objectives and strategies corresponding to them

- clarifications (legislative, code of conduct, etc.);
- reporting of positive / negative aspects of any nature (environment, behaviour, health and safety, etc.)
- allocation of resources to implement a change management process closely linked to the mission, vision, strategy university and constantly changing labour market (over a period of 4 years, how long a license takes, it can change dramatically).

3. National education law requirements customization with SA 8000 requirements for implementation of a Social accountability management systems in higher education

Structure, functions, organization and functioning of higher education are governed by the law of education.

Thus, in addressing the SA 8000 standard need the requirements specifications arises, regarding: working with children, working hours, forced labour, wages, health and safety, disciplinary measures.

Table 1 presents some requirements of the law education versus the SA 8000 standard implementation considerations in higher education

Table 1. The correlation of the SA 8000 standard requirements with the Education Law and ways to implement them

SA 8000 requirement standard (Standard SA 8000, 2008)	Education Law	Suggestion regarding the way of implementation
Child Labour	Art 90, Art 91; Section 44 (forms of employment) Chapter 2/Art. 258, Art. 294	The law does not specify the minimum age of employment for the auxiliary personnel (e.g.: maintenance). The implementation of this requirement, requires schools to define rules to discourage the organization, suppliers / collaborators (who work for and on its behalf) to use or support child labour; (both within the organization and outside it)
Discrimination	Art 118, Art 202	The legislation refers only to the principle of the employees, not the students, suppliers / partners working for and on behalf of the organization. Setting the reporting channels for violations to discriminate requirements (include positive), methods of reporting and investigation of cases of discrimination and all forms of discrimination, mechanisms to discourage discrimination and proof of discrimination lead to an efficient implementation of this requirements. Consider mobbing (a phenomenon which binds exclusively to work and relate to shares of psychological pressure, subtle, repetitive,

		performed on an employee by the employer or a group of colleagues to determine the latter to leave that job).
Disciplinary Practices	Art. 96 (h), Section 8 and 11	Disciplinary process (extended to students) involve establishing clear categories of misconduct and severity for each participant in the work process, the types of sanctions, disciplinary rehabilitation measures and rules: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – establishing the commission research misconduct; – how to research misconduct; – how to communicate the results of research committee of the persons concerned; – how to challenge the commission and / or decision from the research.
Code of Conduct	Art. 98, Art.124 (c), Art. 128 (b), Art.130 (1), Art. 213 (f), Art. 304; Section 5	The Code of Conduct should be viewed more than a code of ethics as, the responsibility means more than compliance with the letter of the law, such as searching and finding the correct answer in situations encountered. The Code of Conduct and Ethics should be a dynamic document, reviewed and updated to suit the goals and objectives of the organization. The Code of Conduct and Ethics should be supported by the implementation guidelines to ensure that daily activities carried out within the university, the university declared beliefs consistent with the university's values with the university objectives. For the effective implementation of the code of conduct and ethics is useful to establish mechanisms to motivate and sanction for signalling in an open manner of the breaches / potential violations of law, regulations or University policy or suspicious behaviour as immoral, those to, failure to inform the ethics committee, where the worker is aware of the existence of breaches / a possible violation of the law, regulations or university policy or suspicious behaviour as illegal, representing a violation of the rules of conduct, and shall be punished as appropriate
Working hours	ART. 251-regulation of teaching workload, Art. 262, Art. 287 The teaching staff activity takes place in a time of 8 hours daily or 40 hours per week)	In developing regulations on working time, the university must take into account all categories of workers: teachers, non -teaching staff and students. To motivate teachers, each university would be useful to establish mandatory workload activities (e.g.: teaching time, preparation courses, correct work / exams, continuing professional education, research, reporting) and during overtime (e.g.: arrears). Time can be defined on a weekly, monthly, or yearly basis, taking as a calculation base, the previous statistics data. The Education Law specifies activities teaching norm, but it is necessary to demonstrate compliance with the Labour Code Article 111 ("The maximum legal working time can not exceed 48 hours per week, including overtime") that the working time is stated (through estimations where possible) and stated in the contract (employee, student, supplier), as appropriate. Working time should refer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – number of hours spent in the classroom, – number of hours per week of attendance in university – number of hours required for the planning, preparation and evaluation of courses / students, – number of hours devoted to other activities (can be defined on a weekly basis or yearly) related to the welfare and progress of students, teachers meetings, professional training, various committee meetings, contact time with students during the remaining time outside teaching and administrative duties, etc. <p>According to the Labour Code, article 111 (2) <i>"The exceptional duration of the work, which includes overtime, may be extended beyond 48 hours per week, which includes overtime, provided that the average working hours, calculated on a reference period for a maximum of 3 calendar months calendar month does not exceed 48 hours per week (Law no. 371 – Labour Code, 2005)"</i></p>
Remuneration	Art. 303 and section 9	Once defined the workload activities (teaching, training courses, mentoring undergraduate work, developing other teaching, practice and research, etc.) for all participants in the educational process (teachers, non-teaching staff and students) wage / exchanges should establish activity codes and amounts for them. The amount of activity code can be determined by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the identified risks (environmental risks when referring to laboratories, jobs involving increased psycho-emotional efforts and exposure time, such as chair, secretary, (grants an additional paid leave or benefits), – the time spent for initiating and implementing improvement actions (e.g.: educational legislative process, active participation in scientific communications, etc.) that bring more value. <p>Therefore, the time can be paid and differentiated according to the work performed (activity code) resulting in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – staff motivation to assume greater responsibility – satisfaction that activity case is recognized, appreciated, – ensuring confidence and stability in labour relations. <p>Remuneration on activity codes (basic salary) combined with benefits wages is leading</p>

Forced labour	Art. 130: a code of ethics and professional	<p>to an equitable remuneration, stimulating the entire staff for involving in achieving education unit. The activity objectives are clear and motivating and the work performance results are easily measured. Regarding the relationship with the suppliers, through contractual requirements, the university must ensure that they do not use the work under the table and the requirements of the Labour Code on working time are respected.</p> <p>The law does not address the forced labour. The organization must define the forced labour and establish and implement procedures, other methods in order to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – regulate the relations with suppliers, sub-contractors in order to ensure that they do not use forced labour; – ban all types of forced or obliged labour, under all conditions or any conditions, including the obliged labour, the forced labour for a financial liability; – clearly and fully describes the terms and conditions of employment prior to hiring, selection and recruitment procedures or during the activities for which he was employed ; – ensuring the physical liberty of the worker who finds time to work, so workers are left free to quit their jobs and manage their leisure without being pressured or intimidated if they are not at work; (e.g.: leaving homes); – ensuring that the organization is ordering goods or services to another organization that uses prisoners, without adequate protection
Health and safety	Articles:3 (r), 7, 164, Section 5 9, art. 272	<p>The university, and in general the education must assume the role through its actions to help shape and maintain a healthy generation, the improvement of health and safety of all those who directly or indirectly support their training. The universities should integrate components on health and safety in accordance with law 319/2006 (Health and Safety Law, 2006) for all participants in the work process (employees, teachers, students) and manage them by applying principles of the standard OHSAS 18001 (The Occupational Health and Safety Advisory Services standard, 2008). The following should accurately be specified in contracts with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the workers: responsibilities and obligations in the field of SSM. – the occupational physician: activities to be conducted to promote the health and safety of the workers. – the suppliers / employees working for the organization and / or on behalf of, the requirements of SSM: health and safety risks to workers subject to both suppliers / collaborators and the risks to which workers are subjected to the university; joint prevention and protection plan risks identified in the university and their suppliers / collaborators, responsibilities and obligations of both parties.

For a correct implementation of a Social Accountability Management System, European Laws need to be corroborated with the national education law and all principles of the SA 8000 standard, 2008, should be integrated with legal requirements, taking into consideration the most restrictive ones. Consequently for implementing the Social Accountability Management System model, a series of proposals were submitted and presented in the 1st table above.

4. Conclusions

The responsibility to the community and society can be an important differentiator between organizations and universities, through their role of training should be more involved in solving social problems of the community in which it operates.

The adherence of the SA 8000 (Social Accountability Management System) standard in higher education is not a fashion but is a way to meet new challenges to maintain activities at a competitive and meet the needs of stakeholders in global market dynamics.

The effective adoption of the SA 8000 standard in the educational units involves:

- terminology harmonization of the legislation with the standards of the education management;
- principles integration "governing schools and higher education and lifelong learning in Romania" in the national education law (National education law no. 1, 2001) to the standards of management and other legal requirements;

- approach by all the factors involved (suppliers, customers, local administrations, state, etc.) in the process of education of a social responsible attitude;
- focus the organization efforts on the applicability (results), and less theorizing (documentation) of the requirements standards and legislation requirements by establishing performance indicators;
- identifying the customers and the interested parts;
- identifying the knowledge and implementation of all legal and regulatory requirements applicable to the organization;
- expanding education law with:
 - responsibilities of the pupils / students
 - evaluation criteria on social responsibility of the auxiliary staff, teachers, pupils/ students in order to lead to the achievement of strategic objectives.

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